

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BANGKO 14813 221317Z

44

ACTION EA-06

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COMUSMACTHAI

S E C R E T BANGKOK 14813

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, TH, US

SUBJ: FORCE REDUCTIONS

REF: BANGKOK 14630; BANGKOK 12589

1. AS I MENTIONED IN BANGKOK 14630 ON MY TALK YESTERDAY WITH MFA UNDER SECRETARY PHAEN WANNAMETHI, WE ARE UNDER STREADILY GROWING PRESSURE TO DIVULGE TO THE THAI OUR NEXT STEP IN THE U.S. FORCE REDUCTION AND ARE ALSO BEING PRESSED TO DISCUSS OUR DESIRES REGARDING THE PHASED CLOSURE OF U.S. BASES.

2. IN ADDITION TO THE PREVIOUSLY REPORTED CONVERSATION WITH PHAEN, GENERAL ADERHOLT HAS BEEN URGED BY GENERAL KRIANGSAK TO REPLY TO HIS LETTER REGARDING WITHDRAWAL PLANNING. AT A MEETING AT THE GENERAL'S HOUSE ON 20 JULY, KRIANGSAK STATED THAT HE WAS MOST ANXIOUS TO DISCUSS THE TIMING OF FUTURE BASE CLOSURES. THIS THOUGHT WAS ALSO PASSED ON TO MACTHAI BY THE U.S. LIAISON OFFICER THERE THE END OF LAST WEEK.

3. ALTHOUGH IN MY TALK WITH PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT ON 27 JUNE HE DECLINED TO BE DRAWN INTO DISCUSSION OF

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BANGKO 14813 221317Z

FUTURE WITHDRAWALS AND COMMENTED THAT "THIS WAS A COM-

PLICATED SUBJECT WHICH WOULD REQUIRE FURTHER DISCUSSION," WE BELIEVE THAT THIS WAS AN OFF-HAND REMARK AND WE HAVE DETECTED NO DESIRE ON THE PART OF THE RTG TO ALTER ITS VIEW THAT U.S. BASES WOULD BE CLOSED BY MARCH 1976.

4. AS WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT ARRANGEMENTS FOR RESIDUAL INSTALLATIONS CAN BE NEGOTIATED AND WERE GIVEN A BROAD HINT BY THE PRIME MINISTER IN HIS PRESS CONFERENCE ON 28 JUNE THAT HE HAD NO OBJECTION IN PRINCIPLE TO SMALL NUMBERS OF AMERICAN MILITARY PERSONNEL IN VARIOUS PLACES IN THAILAND.

5. AS VIEWED FROM BANGKOK, THE U.S. WITHDRAWAL HAS NOT BEEN PRECIPITATE AND THE MODIFICATIONS BEING WROUGHT IN THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE ARE WIDELY UNDERSTOOD. IT APPEARS TO US THAT THE PRESENT DISCONTINUATION OF WITHDRAWAL ACTIONS IS VERY LIKELY TO BACKFIRE AND CAN CREATE POLITICAL PROBLEMS WHICH WILL RENDER MORE DIFFICULT THE NEGOTIATIONS FOR A RESIDUAL PRESENCE OR RE-ENTRY RIGHTS. IT ALSO APPEARS TO US THAT FURTHER REDUCTIONS WILL HAVE TO BE HANDLED ON THE BASIS OF BASE CLOSURES RATHER THAN OF OVERALL FORCE LEVEL REDUCTIONS.

6. WE RECOGNIZE THAT THERE ARE ASPECTS OF THE WITHDRAWAL QUESTION WHICH GO FAR BEYOND THE PAROCHIAL VIEW OF THIS EMBASSY BUT BELIEVE THAT CONTINUING MAJOR REDUCTIONS IN OUR DEPLOYMENT IN THAILAND WILL HAVE TO BE CARRIED OUT AND THAT IT IS BOTH IN OUR INTEREST AND IN THAT OF THE THAI TO COMMENCE DISCUSSIONS ON A PHASED PROGRAM. WE BELIEVE THAT FOLLOWING THE RETURN OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER FROM THEIR CURRENT ASEAN TOUR, DISCUSSIONS OF OUR RESIDUAL PRESENCE COULD BE UNDERTAKEN PROVIDED WE ARE AUTHORIZED TO EXPLAIN, POSSIBLY IN RELATIVELY GENERAL TERMS, WHAT WE WOULD LIKE TO MAINTAIN.

7. THE PRESENT STAND-FAST APPEARS TO HAVE VALIDITY ONLY IF ONE ASSUMES THAT THAI POLICY WILL CHANGE DRAMATICALLY IN THE NEAR FUTURE AND THAT THE MAIN-  
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 BANGKO 14813 221317Z

MAINTAINING OF MAJOR U.S. INSTALLATIONS IS DESIRED BY THE USG. IN OUR OPINION SUCH A RADICAL CHANGE IN THAI POLICY IS MOST UNLIKELY AND CANNOT BE THE ASSUMPTION ON WHICH U.S. PLANNING IS BASED. IT IS ALSO OUR IMPRESSION THAT U.S. INTERESTS IN THIS AREA WOULD BE SERVED BY AN AS YET UNESTABLISHED DEPLOYMENT LEVEL BUT ONE FAR SMALLER THAN THAT WHICH EXISTS TODAY.

8. WE WOULD URGE THAT WE BE GIVEN IMMEDIATELY AUTHORITY TO DISCUSS THE CLOSURE OF NAKHON PHANOM AND THAT WITHIN A SHORT PERIOD WE BE AUTHORIZED TO DISCUSS FUTURE WITHDRAWALS ALONG THE LINES PROPOSED IN BANGKOK 10588 WHICH ENVISAGED THE CLOSURE OF UDORN, KORAT AND UTAPAO BETWEEN NOW AND MARCH 1976. THE UNDERTAKING OF NEGOTIATIONS REGARDING OUR RESIDUAL PRESENCE, RE-ENTRY RIGHTS, ETC. COULD BE UNDERTAKEN AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF A MUTUALLY AGREED TO OVERALL PROGRAM.

9. WITH THE TOP LEVEL OF THE RTG FOCUSED ON THE KHUKRIT VISIT TO PEKING AND ON HIS PRESENT TOUR OF THE PHILIPPINES AND SINGAPORE, THAI ATTENTION HAS BEEN DISTRACTED FROM THE U.S. WITHDRAWAL. WE MUST EXPECT HOWEVER A MOUNTING DEGREE OF PRESSURE ON THIS ISSUE AND WE BELIEVE IT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO AVOID AN UNNECESSARY CONFRONTATION ARISING FROM A LIKELY THAI PERCEPTION OF THE U.S. AS SEEKING TO EXTEND ITS PRESENCE IN BLATANT DISREGARD OF THAI WISHES.  
WHITEHOUSE

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